SONGS AT ANCHOR

B. L. Shurtleff

Sincerely

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SONGS AT ANCHOR

NOTE OF APPRECIATION

My sincere thanks for aid in publishing this volume are due the following: Mr. J. McIntyre, for acting as sponsor; "Sea Power" and "The Poets of the Future" for their permission to reprint poems; and to Mrs. Josephine Wilbur, Miss M. P. Medary, and Mr. K. O. Mason, for the inspiration and criticism that they have given me.

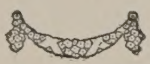
B. L. S.

SONGS AT ANCHOR

BY

BERTRAND L. SHURTLEFF

BROWN '22



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To

HOPE SEAL

One look at you
And all my broken dreams,
All thoughts of failure,
Of fatigue and pain,
Became as nothing;
And my rosy schemes
Drifted around me,
Bringing hope again.

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MY PRAYER

I ASK no cross to mark the spot
Where I may fall;
No monument to grace the site;
No heralds singing of the fight,
But just the rhymes that I may write,
And that is all.

I do not ask for happiness
Upon this earth;
But that my God will bless my pen
And wring my soul in pain again
In order that I bring to men
Something of worth.

I seek not for a miser's hoard
Of tawdry pelf,
But just a simple life to lead
With scarce enough to fill each need,
My life unto the world I cede
To find itself.

There is but one thing I desire,
God, grant it me.
That when the lowly and the weak
A steadfast, helpful friend may seek,
My rhymes might come to them and speak
Pointing to thee.

SONG

THIS is the song of the seaman
Bending low at the haul,
This is the song of the fisher
Tending his miles of trawl,
This is the song of the reefer
Changing suits in a squall.

HARRY MAIN OF IPSWICH BAR

HAVE you heard the tale of the sand-bar's wail
That they tell in Ipswich town?
Of the pirate scum who till Kingdom Come
Must flake a sand chain down?

One night by the sea they told it me
As the shrieks came from afar,
And I shivered in fright for the wretch that night
Who is chained to Ipswich Bar.

Oh, Harry Main is the poor thing's name,
Plum Island was his home;
But he wandered far where the palm trees are,
For ever he loved to roam.

He chased at sight and he sank in fight
The vessels from ev'ry main;
With cruel spurn and with torture's burn
He scourged the seas for gain.

But the devil knew as Harry slew
That the time would come to pay,
And he laughed aloud as he fixed a shroud
On the bar off Ipswich Bay.

But Harry cried as his victims died,
"I own this bit of sea;
With false-fixed lights on the darkest nights
I can lure ships on to me.

"I can wreck with zest, and I'll take their best,
And I'll toss the rest away."
For he could not know what storms would blow
On the bar off Ipswich Bay.

But Harry Main now coils a chain,
A chain that is made of sand;
He flakes it down where he made men drown,
On the bar near Ipswich land.

And whenever the strand shall part in his hand
He must shriek aloud in pain
To let Ipswich know it is going to blow,
That the sea is at war again.

He is chained out there in the tempests' blare
At the mouth of Ipswich Bay,
And coil as he might through the dark of night,
His work is washed off by day.

So if you go when the tide is low
At night by the blinking star,
You will find poor Main and his endless chain
In the surf of Ipswich Bar.

THE MEN WHO FOLLOW THE SEA

OFF Hatteras in a howling gale
In a tramp that was nothing but rust and scale,
Off Hatteras at the fall of night
With the sea all mountains of seething white,
And the old tramp making a losing fight.
But such is the lot of sailors,
Of men who follow the sea.

Off Hatteras in a nasty trough
When our engines started to wheeze and cough,
And the chief's voice cut through the wrack of gears,
Damning the lot of the engineers,
While the firemen shoveled to drown their fears.
But such is the work of sailors,
Of men who follow the sea.

Off Hatteras with a gale run high
And life holding too much joy to die,
So we shoveled like mad in the bunkers there,
While the coal-dust rose like our black despair
And the bulwarks echoed our bits of prayer.
But it's all in the life of sailors,
Of men who follow the sea.

Off Hatteras and the storm was gone,
And the seas rolled easier far by morn.
But a prayer came now from the engineer,
While the fireroom help that had cringed in fear,
Bawled out oaths that would scorch the ear.
But that is the way with sailors,
With men who follow the sea.

(Permission to reprint applied for.)

A WHALING BALLAD

1

FROM Buzzards Bay we squared away
With sails all drawing free,
With well-stocked holds we braved the colds
Of many a northern sea.
For the oily whale had flipped his tail
And puffed his spray in air,
And one by one our ships drove on
To seek the monsters there.

2

We gathered 'round that frozen ground
By dozens and by scores;
We plied our trade in sun and shade
With bending backs and oars.
We killed for gain, nor thought of pain,
Nor of the whales we slew;
Our vats did boil with seething oil,
And still the killings grew.
Until we lay in ice-fringed bay
With fat-stripped bodies near,
And men foretold by growing cold
The ice-pack and its fear.

3

But skippers drove and whaling throve
And no ship headed south

Until one night, oh thing of fright,
A dead whale oped its mouth,
And chanted clear, that all might hear,
The warning of the bay.
And each dead whale took up the tale
And sung it 'till the day.

4

"Fools without fear oft gather here
Content to get their oil;
They fiercely slay by night and day,
And madly do they toil.
They never leave, if you'll believe,
This land of bitter chills
Until the night of winter white
Sends in the floating hills.
And then, too late, they sense their fate;
The icebergs grind their fleet;
They end their lives where killing thrives,
Through powers they cannot beat.
So leave this bay at break of day,
Or say your prayers in vain."
The night wore on, but with the morn,
Came warmer winds and rain.

5

Though seamen raved, each skipper braved
The warning of that night;
And more whales fell, we waged so well
Our age-old, bitter fight.
That night again the dead whales' train
Chanted their song of woe,

Till seamen quailed, and strong men wailed,
And each ship hoped to go;
And far-off stars sent back the bars
With echoes ringing clear;
And ice was made in sun and shade;
And watchers cringed in fear.

6

But with the light came whales to sight,
And so again we toiled;
We thought of pay and fattened lay,
And how the kettles boiled.
At last night came to end our game,
But in the red fires' glare,
All ghostly weird, the whales appeared
And bade us go from there.

7

And each dead whale did lash his tail
Until the seas ran high,
But like a star each mast and spar
Hung rigid in the sky.
And white-flecked foam formed tower and dome
And reached to topmast-head,
While knees grew weak and none could speak,
So noisy were the dead.

8

Until the light disclosed the sight,
The thing we all did fear,
For miles and miles of great ice-isles
Were drawing ever near.

Then out sails sprang, and orders rang,
And each ship bore away.
But winds were light and e'en at night
We still were in the bay.

9

The whales once more came from the shore
To jeer us on to death,
And all the ice seemed doubled twice,
And winds were but a breath.
We towed our crafts with bent oar-hafts,
And crawled upon our way,
But still the sight of hills of white
Kept narrowing to the bay.
Until too late to change our fate,
We saw such things must be;
Our ships and oil we left, to toil
In small boats to'rd the sea.

10

The ships were ground with splintering sound,
And boats were cloven fair,
And every night the cries of fright
Burst on the still cold air.
And cold it grew till men froze through
All rigid at the oar,
But still we rowed the track that showed
Along the ice-fringed shore.

11

Our arms were strained as on we gained,
And friends were left behind,

For on we sped where channels led,
  Nor tarried to be kind.
And, as by scores ships lined the shores
  Behind us in the bay,
So boats would go beneath the floe;
  Our numbers dropped each day.

12

Two hundred ships from Bedford's slips
  And some from Glo'ster town
Had frozen fast; keel, hull, and mast,
  And surely must go down.
And now boats ground with crunching sound
  Till hundreds lined the way,
And dying groan and piteous moan
  Stretched out across the bay.

13

Still on we drew, the battered few,
  And narrower grew our lane,
And very night increased our fright
  And every day our pain.
Until at last our boats froze fast
  And no lane led before;
A cry was raised, for worn and dazed,
  We had not heart for more

14

Though far from land we found at hand
  The body of a whale,
And made our camp all free from damp
  Beneath the monster's tail.
And there we stayed while cold winds played
  And blizzards drifted high,

For cold whale meat proved good to eat.
And no man dared to die.

15

But scurvy sores filled all our pores
And frost ate flesh away,
So black and sear from chin to ear,
We waited for the day.
And northern lights shone through the nights
And jeered our lust for gain,
And winter grew so cold we knew
No longer ease from pain.

16

Till souls grew numb, and tongues grew dumb,
And time stood frozen still,
And on our sight to left and right
Stretched frozen plain and hill.
And once again the fearful strain
The whales sang reached our ears,
And we were told why arctic cold
Had spared us with our fears.

17

And as the song re-echoed long
The ice began to crack,
And every boat was soon afloat
Upon a watery track.
And on we went far down the rent
Till opened seas were reached,
And there we found a frozen ground;
And there our boats were beached.

18

The nights gave way to lengthening day,
And ice kept floating free,
Until at last a far-off mast
Was plain for all to see.
The ship came nigh and heard our cry,
And saved us from our plight,
Though many a nose, with ears and toes,
Had frozen off that night.

19

Alive and well, we were to tell
The message of our toil
To all who roam away from home
On future quests for oil.
To warn all men that ne'er again
Would whale-gods let us slay;
To warn ships from the things to come
If they should seek that bay.

20

All black and sear; a sight to fear,
We came at last to home,
We settled down in farm and town,
And never more will roam.
Despite their scorn, we yearly warn
The ships that sail away,
And no man fails to heed the whales
That guard that far-off bay.

TO NEW BEDFORD

THE busy port from which I sailed of yore
No longer boasts the grandeur of her fleets,
No noisy shout of seamen on her streets,
No casks of oil piled high along the shore,
No greetings of old friends as long before;
One merely nods to everyone he meets,
Thinks of old times, and hastily retreats;
And silence reigns; — the fleet comes back no more.
Oh, how I long to see you live again,
To see your harbor filled once more with trade,
To see your proud ships rocking down the main,
Your bold sons claiming what their sires have made.
But, ah, I fear my wish will be in vain;
Thy fame is but a shadow, I a shade.

TO THE LAST WHALER

FULL many a craft that I have known of yore,
Full many a deck that knew my swinging tread,
Lies now beneath the waters with her dead,
Or flaunts her bones upon some far-off shore
Oh, many a ship I sailed will never more
Ring back a lookout's cry from topmast-head,
Nor feel her way to port by sounding-lead,
For all have come to rest, their sailings o'er.
And I must wander like a ghost forlorn
Among the wharves where once they used to be;
Must peek at spiles their chafing sides have worn;
Must gaze at things they brought from over-sea;
Must long to go to meet the ones I mourn,
To join the men and ships that wait for me.

OH, SING ME A SONG

OH, sing me a song with a seaboard sound,
With the swishing wash of the sea,
With the raging roar of a north storm shore
And the lap of a southern lee.
Oh, sing me a song of the things that are
And the things that used to be.

Come, tell me a tale of the ships that ride
Through the teeth of the wind and rain,
From the square-rigged craft to the fore 'n' aft
That plies from the coast of Maine,
Or better yet of the galleons old
That hailed from the ports of Spain.

And tell me too of the men that sail
At night by the tolling bell.
Of the life they know, and the roads they go,
And the way they dice with Hell;
And I'll listen here till your tongue runs dry
And you haven't a tale to tell.

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JOY OF SAILING

WHEN a cross-chop gets to lapping
On your windward bow,
And you're holding ev'ry point you dare to take;
When the wind keeps getting stronger
And just settles down to blow,
And the bubbles 'gin to surge along your wake;

When she heels clear down to leeward
Till her rail is in the foam,
And the Jackies start to heave the ballast 'round,
And the greenhorn in the fo'castle
Fair wishes he was home
And wonders what it feels like just to drown;

Then it's great to feel her tugging
And just ease her off a point
And see her rise defiant of the gale,
With cordage stretched to breaking
And a creak in ev'ry joint
And just the slightest chance that she will fail.

Oh, it isn't just the passing
Of the stake-boat at the end
Nor the prize you get for winning in the race.
It's just the pleasure of it all.
The fighting with the men
And the countless little dangers that you face.

So clear her decks of cordage, boys;
Break out the bags of sand;
Stand ready here to hold her as she goes.
The wind is puffing out the west
And racing is at hand,
And we want to clear the harbor when she blows.

WHALER'S LUCK

SIX months out of Bedford
And never a fin in sight;
Six long months on the lookout
And never a single fight;
Nothing but sea, and sunshine,
Clouds, and the sea, and night.

Twelve months out from Bedford
And never a single shout;
Twelve long months in the hooker
And never a sign of spout;
Nothing but filling and furling,
Running, and putting about.

Two years out of Bedford
And never a single fin;
Two long years of salt-horse,
Weevily bread, and gin;
It looks as though we're Jonahed
And haven't a chance to win.

Three years out of Bedford
And the boys beginning to fret,
They're tired of the nigger women,
The tropic storms and the wet;
Time we were putting for Bedford
And we haven't a whale as yet.

Forty months from Bedford
  And still we've an empty hold,
Though we've sweat in the Injun Ocean
  And froze in the Arctic cold,
But we've got to put back to Bedford,
  For there's little to eat but mold.

Four days sail to Bedford
  And forty-four months out,
When sudden the man in the crow's nest
  Startles us all with a shout,
"See all the big ones around us!
  Quick! Tell the skipper! A spout!"

Four years and back to Bedford,
  No empty casks in our hold;
Forgotten the heat and the fever;
  Forgotten the food and the cold;
Nothing to think of but women,
  Wine, and the clink of gold.

A TROPICAL DRINK

THERE have songs been sung by the writing men
In praise of their ale and wine,
An' some thought beer was the only stuff,
An' some thought whiskey fine.
Oh, some likes it 'alf and 'alf, boys;
And some likes it gasping raw,
But give me the juice of a cocoanut green,
A chunk of ice, and a straw.

I mind me once on the Spanish Main
We were crowded up to the bar, —
Some of us boys were from up in the States
And had toted our thirstings far:
And some big lout of a Dutchman there
Bellowed a loud guffaw
When I called for the juice of a cocoanut green,
A chunk of ice, and a straw.

Oh they buried him there in the land of palms
When the fever and beer were done.
They put up a sign at the head of his grave
And this is the way it run:
"If you want to live in this torrid hole,
Try quenching your thirsting maw
With the juice of a cocoanut, sliced off green,
A chunk of ice, and a straw."

HOME CALLS

THERE'S a green lobster waiting on the ledge for me;
There's a big fish flopping in the open sea;
There's an old boat lying on the leeward shore;
And my heart is longing for the sea once more.
For I'm going home tomorrow,
No more I'm going to roam.
I've had my treat
Of the city street
And tomorrow I go home.

There are fat clams growing on the outer bar;
There are quahaugs hiding where the mud-flats are;
There are oysters fattening in the cove below,
And they all are calling so I've got to go.

There are black ducks huddled in the Nor'west bend;
There are wild geese passing with a southward trend;
There are lone loons crying through the day and night,
They have got my heart strings and they're hauling tight.

There are big waves breaking on the outer reef;
There are wrecked ships lying on the jagged teeth;

There is romance lurking in the far stretched sand
That is calling loudly and is near at hand,
For I'm going home tomorrow,
No more I'm going to roam.
I've had my treat
Of the city street
And tomorrow I go home.

SEA WINDS

UP across the sand dunes the South wind's calling,
Calling to the fisher folk; bids them leave the bay;
Tells them of the white crests, the taut sheets hauling;
Tells them of the wonders and dangers far away.

Up the bay a ship comes, her soft bone curling;
Smelling of the spices of distant sunny isles.
Gay crew up aloft, busy at the furling,
Glad to make the home port, faces wreathed in smiles.

Down across the harbor the big ship's sailing,
Bearing off new cargo, seeking marts of trade.
Green-hand forward feels his heart afailing,
Wishes he was home again, longs to wield the spade.

In across the sand-dunes the wind comes wailing,
Shrieking at the fisher folk, frothing in the bay;
Tells them of the wrecked ships, the whole fleet's failing;
Tells them that their own boy will always be away.

THE SAILOR'S SWEETHEART

MY little girl,
Her lips would curl,
If she could look at me;
For I'm a dirty sailorman
Asailing on the sea.

Oh, she would gasp
And her hands would clasp
If she saw me here tonight,
Tossing around on this bag of hay
Cursing the things that bite.

She'd turn up her nose
If she saw my clothes
Painted, and patched, and worn,
She wouldn't see how I could put them on
Greasy like this and torn.

She'd raise her eyes
In great surprise,
If she saw what I have to eat;
She'd choke to death if she ever chewed
On the stuff I get for meat.

But I'm quite used
To Mulligan stews
To the dirt, the work and more,
I'd rather be doing the like of this
Than be hanging around ashore.

I'd rather go
Where the sweet fruits grow,
  Where the lingo is not like mine;
Where they judge a man by his heart and head
  Instead of his feathers fine.

So what care I
For a chin tipped high,
  For eyes that flash disdain?
There's many a lass to soothe my heart
  In Norway, France, or Spain.

Always a lass
Of every class
  Wherever we seek the lee;
For no matter how good a fish you've lost,
  There's just as good left in the sea.

CHILDHOOD'S DREAMS

I WENT over the ridge today,
Over the ridge with its southward sweep
Where the salt sea breeze comes in from the deep
With its tales of the waves at play.

I dropped down on the other side
To look at the ships that were anchored there,
To gaze at their spars so tall and bare,
Swaying gently to wind and tide.

I saw the men as they lined the rails,
Their gold-ringed ears, and their kerchiefs gay;
And I listened in awe to their roundelay,
Weighing anchor and setting sails.

I crept over the ridge again,
Over the ridge to the farm and home,
But my thoughts were off with the men that roam,
My young heart cried aloud with pain.

WHEN RATS DESERT A SHIP

I LIKED her clean white painting
And I liked her well-cut bow,
So I signed on at the office,
For I didn't know the scow.
I was bleary-eyed from drinking,
I was coming from my bats.
But I didn't like her looks, boys,
When I saw the clearing rats
That came piling down her hawsers
Like they'd seen a million cats.
For a grizzled seaman told me
That if rats desert a ship
It's a sign that she is chartered
For old Davy Jones's slip,
That no matter where she heads for
She will never end her trip.

But I hadn't any money;
I was broke and wasn't fit;
I was shaking like the palsy,
And I'd lost my bag and kit;
I was beached and had to take her;
Told myself 'twas only rum,
That I'd soaked myself in "hootchie"
Till my brain was like a scum,
That the Gods were with the hooker
And had never turned a thumb;

That I'd dreamed I saw the rat slide
'Fore I sobered from my spree;
That no rats had ever left her,
'Twas the wits slid out of me —
Still I wished I didn't hafter
Take no chances with the sea.

We were twelve hours off the Azores
When the hooker sprung a plate
Some two hundred miles to leeward
When we felt the hand of fate.
In a nasty bit of sea-way
One big comber bashed her in,
For the rust had eaten through her
Till her paint was just a skin,
And her plates gave way before it
Like a piece of canning tin.
So we're anchored in an offing
Known as Davy Jones's slip,
Underneath the Gulf Stream waters
Where the currents surge and rip,
And I leave one word to sailors,
"Jump, when rats desert a ship!"

AN OWNER KNOWS NO FEAR OF THE SEA

WE wallowed out through a froth of yeast
On a course that was north by twenty east;
Wallowed out through a southeast gale,
Our sweethearts watching with faces pale;
We wallowed out and across the Sound
In spite of the big sea's wrack and pound,
For 'twas time that fishers were on the ground,
And an owner knows no fear of the sea.

We struggled on till the fall of night;
Wallowed in troughs with our decks all white;
Climbed up ridges that topped the world;
Sank in depths where the blue suds whirled;
Drove straight on in our feeble way
Till the night came down with its frightful gray,
For a fisher must dare if he earns his pay,
And an owner knows no fear of the sea.

Our joints were sprung by the wrest and strain;
Our engines coughed, and we logged no gain;
The water rose on the pumps below;
We settled amidships and wallowed slow.
So we headed her off before the gale
For a bad lee-shore and a certain fail,
But such is always the fisher's tale
When an owner knows no fear of the sea.

HO, SING–HO, FOR A SAILOR

NEVER a sight of ship or shore,
Sea behind us and sea before,
Off on a good long trip once more.
Ho, sing-ho, for a sailor.

Beached far south with a Spanish scum,
Frothing mouthed with a cry for rum,
Guess we'll stay until Kingdom Come.
Ho, sing-ho, for a sailor.

Rotting here on a jail-house bunk,
Fed on rice and a piece of punk,
Just because we were stupid drunk,
Ho, sing-ho, for a sailor.

Oh, we'll have the consul down with bail,
And we'll say good-bye to this scorching jail,
For when our ship pulls out we'll sail.
Ho, sing-ho, for a sailor.

OFF NEW BEDFORD

THE wind howled over the lighthouse top;
The sea beat on the shore
As I list to the tale of a gallant ship
That will never come back more.

She'd a crew of blacks from the Cape Verde Isles
That spoke in Portagee,
With men from Norway, Finland too,
And the shores of the Irish Sea.

She'd whites from the rocky Yankee farms
Mixed up with Sandwich brown,
With a skipper who hailed from New Bedford,
And a mate from Westport Town.

She had chuck and gear for a four years cruise
In quest of the mighty whale,
A full slop-chest, and crate of pigs —
But let us on with our tale.

She had cleared the harbor and faced the Sound
With Gooseberry Neck abeam,
When every inch of her canvas wings
Showed white in the sunrise gleam.

She had breasted the Hen and Chickens light
With the Sound Pigs off her bow,
When the helmsman spoke to the greenhorn lad,
"I reckon she's goin' to blow."

But the *old man* felt of the soft shore breeze,
And looked at the oily sea,
Then squinted aloft at the bellied sails
And ordered his pot of tea.

But scarce had he blown on his steaming cup
And toasted the sad sea's dead,
When the devil's own son of a howling squall
Jumped screaming from off Gay Head.

As it came from the open sea beyond
It twisted between the isles,
And leaped from the top of Gay Head Bluff
With the force of a thousand miles.

Then it struck that craft with her full sails set
So quick that she could not heel,
And in less than the catch of a seaman's breath
She had turned the sky her keel.

The squall was gone with the speed it came
With nothing left in its lee,
But the wreck of a ship tossed bottom up
In a wreckage-littered sea.

Naught but a wreck tossed bottom up,
And a wealth of widows' tears,
And another tale for the hangers-on
To tell in the later years.

SEA ASPECTS

WITH a rush and a roar
You beat on the shore
O, Sea, with your wrath pent high.
With a smash and a crash
And a wild high dash
Your spray leaps to the sky.
Then you growl again,
And you charge the main
But Earth sends you swashing by,
For here you wear
And there you tear,
But over yonder you make repair
And the hills of the earth are high.

Then slowly you sink like a little child
When boyish play is done.
You loll and lap, and your wash is mild,
And the roar is gone from your run.
While lazily, slowly, all day long
You drone, and seethe, and sigh.
And a sadness comes to your little song
As the tide marks bleach and dry,
For yours is not the conquering way,
And the land with its hills is here to stay.

OUR BOY

MOTHER, I'm missing the boy tonight,
For it's long since he went away.
And I hear the rain on the window-pane,
And the sky looks dull and gray.
And I never have felt so sad before
As I think of him over there,
As he takes his stand on No-Man's-Land
With death in the very air.

Oh, mother, I hear a knock at the door
But I dare not bid them come,
For I fear for our joy in our noble boy,
And my temples throb and hum.
For I know the message they're going to bring;
I can read each word that's said,
And it stands out clear, they're the words I fear,
"Your son is reported dead."

Yes, mother, I know that you'll miss the boy,
Though you never have much to say.
For the fret and care have touched your hair
With a silvery glint of gray.
But we'll set up his empty chair each night
And we'll drown each tear with a sigh,
For we both of us know that he had to go
And he wasn't afraid to die.

THE REAL TREASURE

A LOFTY pinnacle of fame
Once gleamed before me,
And my every thought was of that goal:
For it I struggled, vainly, as I thought at first,
But one spoke words of cheer upon the way
And I kept on.

The pinnacle now rests beneath my feet;
I reached the goal I aimed at,
But in doing, missed the one
That on my way had helped me to achieve.
So here I sit, mid halls that once did glisten,
And benches that once thronged with gallant men,
But vacant now as if by plague possessed,
Mid wealth and splendor that I dared not dream
I e'er could reach, but now 'tis mine.
And I — I sigh for one who helped me on my way
But I forgot and, thoughtless, left behind.

TO MOTHER M.

MOTHER, I hear that your boy has gone,
Gone o'er the tip of the last divide;
With a soldier's heart and his laurels won,
The death that the hero has ever died.

That he went with a smile to his waiting grave
Staunch, unflinching, his purpose true.
And naught could have kept a lad so brave
As the thought of a mother at home like you.

For you bore him clean in a world of sin;
You led him straight through his childhood days;
You taught him the code that will always win;
And now for you both there is naught but praise.

So dry up the fount of your endless tears
And comfort your heart with his record true,
For somewhere, there in the future years,
His manly young spirit is waiting for you.

AIR CASTLES

I SAT in a hunter's cabin
Far out on a wind-swept isle.
Weary with hours of toiling,
I longed to rest a while.

The fire in the wee grate flickered
And turned to a dull red glow,
While the cold wind rattled the windows
And beckoned me on to go.

But there from the glowing embers
A face peered out at me,
The face of a sweet young maiden
That I'd longed for days to see.

So I paid no heed to the warning,
Nor thought of the rising tide,
Till the eyes in the fire had left me
And the last of the coals had died.

Then the cold crept into the cabin
And shattered my childish dream,
Bringing me back to this hard old earth
To labor and plot and scheme.

So I hurried down to the waiting boat
To fight with the wind and tide,
But often I thought of the glowing eyes
That burned in the fire and died.

A VISIT BY FAME

THE summer sun is sinking low
Behind the forest in the West,
Earth trembles with a passing thrill
As through the shadows steals the chill
That heralds evening rest.

The robin trills his last farewell
And leaves his perch above my door;
The children's voices, shrill and gay,
Die in the echoes far away
And all is still once more.

Then, as I nod on, half asleep,
She comes as if to heed my prayer,
I scarce can hear the gentle tread
Nor feel the hand upon my head
Caress my rumpled hair.

My arm goes out to seek her waist;
My lips speak out to call her on; —
The wraith escapes my eager grasp,
'Tis but the empty air I clasp; —
The Vision — She has gone.

TO HOPE

YOUR eyes are like the clear depths of the sea,
Or like the dancing radiance of a star,
Unless they stay one moment as they are
A sane thought of them is denied poor me.
Ripe are those lips that pouting seem to be
Ever a bait to tempt me on too far.
My humble spirit is the only bar,
It keeps me as your servant on my knee.
New fires of hope rise up within my heart,
Eternal vows to serve you cross my lips.
How could you keep me anxious from the start,
Or let me talk of travel and of ships.
Perhaps you knew I had not strength to part
Ever again, if once I touched your lips.

THEY TOLD ME LOVE WAS BUT A FLOWER

THEY told me love was but a flower,
A thing to treasure for an hour,
A blessing that could never stay,
Short-lived at best, 'twould fade away.

I looked deep in your eyes, my dear,
And found the balm to soothe my fear,
For in those deep blue orbs I saw
A deathless love that knows no flaw.

I then turned to my own desire
To see if time would quench its fire,
But found my heart was gone for good;
You had it, then I understood; —

They knew not love who cautioned me;
Love that once lives must always be.

IF I SHOULD WAKE

IF I should wake
And find love's spring gone dry,
No more the flush of beauty on thy cheek,
No love light in thine eye,
Oh, let me die.

If I should wake
From out this golden dream
And find these lips I press
Not what they seem,
These sighs but lies
To charm but till tomorrow,
Baiting my heart along
To bring it sorrow.
God knows what I would do,—
Or how behave to you;
But this I know,
I pray it be not so.

MY CHOICE

IF I could choose between one night,
One night the same as this,
With each fond mem'ry lived again,
With each endearing kiss;
If I could choose 'twixt such a night
And four score years and ten
To live them in this hard old world
Of books and work and men
With never more a sight of you,
And never more your smile,
Nor even these fond memories
My sorrows to beguile.
I would not hesitate, I know;
As green things seek the light,
I'd bow and pray in fervent mood,
"God, give me such a night."

JOHNNY'S CROSS

THE trinket that you're fondlin' there? you want to know its worth?
There ain't no way to value that, at least not on this earth.
It's just the cross of valor that my little Johnny won
The night he crept o'er No-Man's-Land and tricked the scheming Hun.

What! ain't you heard the story of the way my Johnny fell
Out there between the trenches in that noisy bloody Hell?
Well then, I'll have to tell ye if ye really didn't hear,
So poke the logs ag'in, my boy, an' draw yer chair up near.
I ain't no hand at spinnin' yarns, it really ain't my bent,
But as near as I can get it, this is how the story went.

They was posted out in Flanders, lyin' in the outer trench,
Him an' lots o' British soldiers an' two companies o' French.

Through the whole long night o' waitin' they had heard a warning sound,
Like as if them German soldiers was a borin' through the ground.
Till the officers got nervous an', afore the light o' day,
They longed to know the kind o' game them Huns was goin' to play.

So they asked the boys a lyin' there which one o' them would go
Across that intervenin' space where blood an' bullets flow.
My John he spoke up quick an' said he thought he'd make the try
'Cause he hadn't no relations save his mother here an' I.
So they loaded him with caution an' a dozen hand grenades
And sent him up an' o'er the top where chance o' livin' fades.
But John he went off smilin' an' the last they heard him say
Was, "Tell my dad an' mother that I went the soldier's way."

Then he was gone across the slough of corpses, blood, an' slime.
A stickin' close to shelter but advancin' all the time.
Till at last he reached their outpost, an' in bus'-ness sort o' way,

He cut the throats o' them two Huns jest like
it was a play,
An' creepin' down the narrer trench, back to the
German lines,
He finds the Boches hard at work a diggin' for
a mine.

He knows by all the T.N.T. he sees 'em draggin'
by
That they're goin' to send the British on a
journey mighty high.
So he waits until it's lighted an' the men has
turned about,
Then he creeps into the cave-like hole to put
the blamed thing out.

The Jerries seen him goin' an' they tried to stop
his rush,
They halted in the narrer trench, as if to have a
brush.
But the fuse kept gettin' shorter, an' the 'splo-
sion gettin' near
So them coward German soldiers they just lighted
out in fear.

Now as for John, he never stopped, an' never
swerved a mite,
Though blood was tricklin' down his face an'
cloggin' up his sight.
His skin was tore to ribbons by that scratchin',
clingin' wire,
An' his throat was dry an' parchin' till it seemed
it was afire.

But still he kept a pluggin' on with jest that single aim,
He'd get that fuse an' put it out to trump the German's game.

Down in that dark an' narrer hole on marrer-bones he went,
A gettin' sick an' dizzy as he lower, lower bent.
Ten feet he crawls into the cave — then twenty — thirty-five —
Until he gets to wond'rin' if he'll reach the thing alive.
And then he sees, far ahead a tiny spark o' fire
That splutters like a length o' fuse that's draggin' in the mire.
Then he pulls himself together, an' a ratchin' of his frame,
He sort o' slides across that space an' grabs that bit o' flame.
With one big bite he cuts the fuse; that last act was the best,
An' while his body sinks to earth, the soul of him went West.

Meanwhile, the boys he'd left behind had seen the German rout,
So they sent a small detachment for to see what 'twas about.
They found poor Johnny's stiffened corp', an' there ag'in the wall,
They found the T.N.T. an' fuse, the settin' told it all.

An' the high man over there in France, he sent
us two this cross
As a sort o' honored emblem for the loyal son
we los'!
O' course we hate to lose him, but the two of us
allowed
There was glory in his goin', an' we surely do
feel proud,
For he wan't afraid to answer when he heard his
country call;
An' if we had a dozen more I 'low we'd send 'em
all!

THE MAIDEN'S CHOICE

SHE smiled up at me on the street
As I went rushing by.
I could not miss the look so sweet
That sparkled in her eye.

I could not help but note her smile,
I answered it with glee.
I pondered then for quite a while
On why she gave it me.

There is no beauty in my face,
My clothes are far from fine,
Far better forms go by that place,
And lighter steps than mine.

One can not guess the thoughts they take,
Nor gauge their choices more.
How could she pick me for a rake
That charming miss of four?

THE KISS

SHE was a goddess;
I a knave.
I know not how
I grew so brave —
I reached for lips
My soul did crave.

My goddess bent,
Ah! hark to this,
She gave her lips
For me to kiss;
And now my heart
Would burst with bliss.

THE DEAD MAID

THERE was rheum of salt on her lips,
There was weed in her flowing hair,
Her form was bent at the hips,
Her eyes had an icy stare.

You have washed the rheum from her lips,
You have combed the weed from her hair,
You have straightened her poor bent hips,
But you can not remove the stare.

For her eyes would tell you the tale
Of a lover who left her there;
Left on a wreck in the gale —
Do you wonder now that they stare?

THE BRIDES

I HAVE been back to the sea again,
To the sea with its joy and woe,
For I wed the tide as my early bride
In the days of long ago!

But I saw your eye in its clear blue depths,
Your hair in its golden weed,
And every gale told me our tale,
And ever my heart did bleed.

And so I am come from the sea again
To ask on my bended knee
That you let me rest my head on your breast
With never a thought of the sea.

THE CHANGE

THERE was a depth of sorrow in your eye,
An ice of disbelief;
Your lips were sad with sorrows yet untold;
Your voice was tinged with grief.
Like some lost soul you wandered up and down,
A very picture of imperson'ed woe.
You had no one to love in all this world,
No place you cared to go.

Now there is joy of living in that eye,
The ice has melted clear;
Your lips bear smiles that reach my very heart;
Your voice is good to hear.
No longer wand'ring, but a soul at rest,
You know the joy of life.
For you have found the girl your soul desired,
You claim her as your wife.

SUBJECTS

OH, some have sung of princes
Of lords and ladies fine,
Of purple robes and laces,
Of scented meats and wine.

Oh, some have sung of daring,
Of gentry of the chase,
Of sports and love of sporting,
Of winners in the race.

Oh, some have sung of losers,
Of men whose lot is low,
Of rogues within the prison,
Of toilers with the hoe.

Oh, some have sung the beauties
Of nature's storms and lees,
Of southern tropic splendors,
Of barren northern seas.

But I would sing of all things
That can be sung by pen,
Of all of nature's wonders,
Of high and lowly men.

Oh, I would sing of all things
  That man can ever know,
Of all the heights of pleasure,
  Of all the depths of woe.

For God has told it fully,
  The pleasure and the pain,
And I would echo weakly
  A tithe of his refrain.

THE UNSEEN THIRD

THERE were only two of us there,
The wonderful maid and I,
Alone, while the busy world
Went hustling, bustling by.

Only the two alone,
And a third that we could not see,
For a little archer bent his bow
With a barb that he meant for me.

As I bowed to those pulsing lips,
Wondrous and warm and red,
The archer sprung his bow
Till the arrow drew to the head.

As the soft lips clung to mine,
The archer hurled his dart;
Now it lies there, twisted and curled,
Firmly lodged in my heart.

YOU ASK ME IF MY LOVE WILL BE

YOU ask me if my love will be
As strong as now,
When grey locks take the gold one's place
And lines of care have seamed my face,
If I'll renew my vow
Of constancy, as now.

You ask me if my love will be
As fervent then.
If life with all its bitterness
Can still the joy with which I press
Lips prized by men.
Ah, woe! how then?

You ask me if my love will be
Forever more.
And, as I look deep in your eye,
My one glad answer is to cry,
Yes, more and more!
Forever more!

WHEN LOVE CALLED

SWEET love called to me one day,
Sought to draw me far away
From my books to go and play.
But the lessons still undone
And the laurels yet unwon
Seemed to call me ever on.
So I turned the love aside
Till at last it starved and died
Leaving me dissatisfied
With my life.

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Sweet love called to me again
And her joyous, happy strain
Burst upon my throes of pain.
Charmed me with the promised bliss
That lies buried in a kiss,
That I could no longer miss.
So I threw the books away,
Took the girl that made me gay,
And went smiling down the way
Of my life.

TO MY READERS

HEED, pay heed to the rhymer,
List to his only plea;
Be not harsh with his rhymings,
Judge not the things to be.
These are the songs of childhood
And better are yet to come.
A richer note to the cymbals,
A louder crash to the drum.
Wait till the years of knowledge,
Till the strife with its lies and truth
Have shown him his childish follies
And tempered the heart of youth.
Then in his years of manhood,
Come and scoff at his lays:
Or, if he fulfills his promise,
Give him your heartfelt praise.

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